

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

TOTALLY FREE!

"They got the guns, we got the numbers" *The Doors* ('Waiting for the Sun' LP, 1968)

WORKERS OCCUPY LOCAL FACTORY

In our last newsletter we wrote a spoof article about workers taking over their factory and running it as a workers' collective. You can imagine our amazement then, when a couple of months later our dreams partly became reality. It wasn't in Haringey, but in Enfield, and although the workers didn't run their factory as a workers' collective, they did occupy it for eight days and are now blocking the owners from removing any equipment. No, this isn't another spoof article – it's real.

On Tuesday 31st March at a meeting lasting just six minutes, workers for Ford Visteon in Enfield were told they were sacked and that their factory would close. Not at some time in the future but there and then. No guarantee of payment of back wages and no commitment to redundancy payments or their pensions were given. They were told they could collect personal belongings on the Wednesday. But things didn't go exactly to the bosses' plan. On the Wednesday, after being prevented from getting in the factory by security, the workers managed to get in through a side door. They occupied the place and barricaded themselves in.

After a court case and (we would say misleading) information from their union Unite, the workers decided to leave the factory and set up a 24-hour picket of the place. They realised their best negotiating tool was the valuable equipment in the factory. If the bosses couldn't get the



The workers united will never be defeated

equipment, they would have to discuss with the workers. The workers have already forced the bosses to attend to one meeting in the US and one in London with their representatives, but so far have been offered sod all. So, the pickets continue.

A support group has been set up to assist the workers, spread information and publicity about the dispute, and carry out solidarity actions the workers don't have time to do. Already information has been translated into German, French, Spanish, Polish and Turkish, and leaflets given out across Europe plus Canada and USA. Supporters and workers have been leafleting Ford dealerships around the country, Dagenham Motors and local football matches to publicise the workers' dispute.

The workers need a lot of support

and are asking people to help in a number of ways:

- Turn up any time night or day to give support and spend time on the picket lines. The factory is on Morson Road, Enfield, EN3 4NQ.
- Financial support is urgent, as money from supporters and other trade unionists is the only cash they are getting. Haringey Solidarity Group have set an account up to get money to the workers. Cheques payable to "HSG" should be sent to PO Box 2474, London, N8. (Write "for Visteon" on the back.)
- Publicise the dispute in your workplace; at your union meetings; amongst your friends and family; to your mates in the pub, club, church or other social space you go to.
- Hand out leaflets wherever you can – there is one you can

download from the website.
(Continued on page 2)

STOP PRESS

As we go to print, Visteon's parent company in the US and the workers have agreed a figure for large redundancy payments to all. However, no agreement has yet been reached over their pension payments. But even at this stage it is still a major victory. A month before, they were sacked with no pension or redundancy and now they are being promised up to £50,000 each. It just goes to show what you can do if workers and a support network stick together and fight the bosses. This is a lesson to other workers in the same position. The pickets have now finished, but the workers are looking at other ways to fight to get their pensions reinstated.

DIRECT ACTION THREATENED IF LAP-DANCE CLUB OPENS

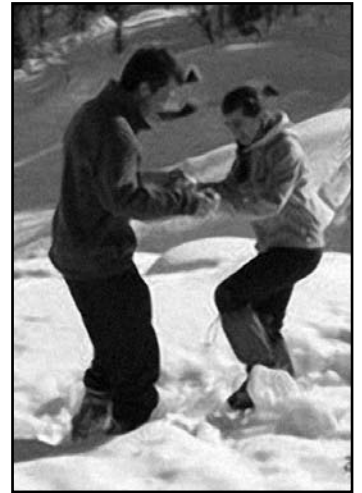
Outraged residents have threatened sustained action if a proposal for a lap-dancing club is given the go ahead by Haringey Council and the police. The Music Palace on Tottenham Lane is in a largely residential area and is situated opposite Rokesly Junior School and the YMCA, and near to Hornsey School for Girls. It will be open from 11am until 4am. At an angry meeting in the Music Palace, the owner and his 'minders' stood smirking at the concerns of over one hundred residents about child protection, the treatment and objectification of women, safety for women and girls in the vicinity of the club, and the behaviour of drunken men (including stag parties) when leaving the club.

The campaigners unashamedly say "Not in my backyard", but at the same time making it quite clear that they want to show solidarity and share information with other groups in the borough who wish to fight plans for these clubs. Another is already proposed for Charlie Browns in Wood Green, opposite the Civic Centre, and more are expected. There is a debate to be had about the rights of sex workers and improving the lives of women currently involved in the sex industry. However, the issue is clouded by the gangsterish and sleazy profit motive of the club owners who do not care how they make their money, how it affects our communities or the image of women generally.

STOP PRESS

Plans to open the club have been dramatically postponed at the request of their solicitor. The news is widely seen as a victory for the hard-working Lap Off! objectors, whose call to arms and promise of 'direct action' was backed by councillors on both sides of the political divide.

Lap Off! spokeswoman Lindsey Wright said: "We are very encouraged by the postponement. We have done an awful lot of work as to how we can defeat it, and we hope it has gone away." She also added: "We are not going to rest on our laurels. We are happy at the news but always ready to respond if it rears its head again."



"We thought you said a Lapland Dance Club..."

For more info or to get involved
email: lapoffn8@googlemail.com

Mutual Aid in the Noughties

Mr A lives with his two daughters, both still at school. He's been off work for several months – having been sacked after an injury at work – and is finding it hard to live on benefits. He used to have an allotment but found it too much work on his own. The economic crisis hasn't made things any easier. So what would make his life better?

Hard times may force us into alternative ways of making ends meet, but in the process we may discover that there's a better life than the rat race. The individualistic and consumerist culture in which we live promotes the idea that we must each have our own copy of whatever, and that it must be new, not second-hand. From school onwards we are fed the myth that competition is the natural order of things. An alternative view is that it is often better to share – this costs less, makes better use of resources, and encourages community spirit.

Capitalism fosters selfishness. Many of us work for an impersonal organisation and when we need goods or services we pay people who we don't even know. The government is supposed to provide a safety net in the welfare state, but it is failing us, while wasting our

money. We pay them to make our lives better and they're making our lives worse. Instead they're wasting millions on grand projects like the Olympics, computer systems that don't work and nuclear weapons that hopefully never will.

Many of our emergency services started on a voluntary basis, and some of them are still run that way. The fire service, lifeboats, St John's ambulance, these were not government initiatives but were set up by individuals getting together.

The cooperative movement began as a self-help alternative to company-owned rip-off shops; but as it has become larger, more centralised and impersonal, the Co-op has degenerated into just another supermarket chain, just another insurance company.

Building societies were originally set up as mutual societies to help people buy or build their own homes, but many have become banks whose aim is profits for shareholders. The financial crisis has partly been fuelled by lending mortgages of over 100% – clearly not to help home ownership, but solely to make interest from loans.

So what's the alternative? Some of the initiatives set up and run by ordinary folk are credit unions,

LETS and Time Banks. All these have a membership scheme. Credit unions operate as a financially regulated savings and loan scheme for their members; LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) arrange the swapping of goods and services; Time Banks focus on sharing skills and time, valuing everyone's time equally.

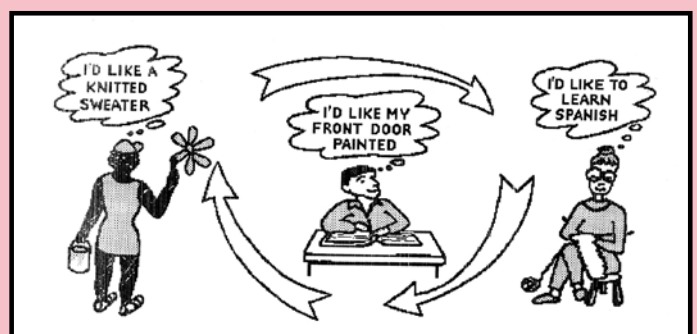
Other kinds of organisation don't have such a formal structure. There are many community groups, some based on culture, others on local area. By helping people get to know each other they make it easier to find help when it's needed. Other groups form around a mutual interest. For example, some allotment holders by the River Lea have founded a collective and, like others, distribute their excess produce.

Like Mr A we can all do with a little

help from friends and neighbours. But in today's fragmented society we can help ourselves most by sharing our talents. It's no good waiting for someone else to take the initiative. If you can't find a few like-minded people to start up something, there are several existing groups who would welcome your help, such as:

- Haringey Federation of Residents Associations:
www.haringeyresidents.org
- Haringey Friends of Parks Forum:
www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk
- North London LETS:
www.nlleets.org.uk
- Tottenham Food Coop:
www.back2earth.org.uk
- Haringey Allotments Forum:
steve.ballard@virgin.net

Spend an hour on the internet and you'll find more.



COPS LIE

When Ian Tomlinson was killed by police at the anti-G20 protests recently, the police's lying media machine yet again jumped into action. Apparently, Mr Tomlinson had a heart attack and while helping him the police came under a "hail of missiles" from protesters.

So, protesters bad, police good. Unfortunately for the cops, video evidence showed them beating and violently pushing him to the ground, and a proper inquest (not the joke one from the police) found he died of internal bleeding. The "hail of missiles" turned out to be one bottle and some protesters were actually seen helping him.

Some may think the police made a genuine mistake with the facts. Rubbish! Time and again police brutalise, arrest or kill people, then put out false statements which the media lap up without question. Think we are making this up? Let's look at a few more

examples. When the police killed Jean Charles de Menezes, they realised they were in the shit. So they claimed he was a terrorist. They said he was wearing a large coat that could hide a bomb and acted suspiciously by jumping the tube barrier. Video evidence came out. He was wearing a denim jacket and walked through the barriers properly. And he wasn't a terrorist. More cop lies to protect themselves and the system they serve.

Then there was the case of the 12 Pakistani men arrested recently. The police quickly stated, "These are the most significant arrests for some time. These men were planning something major."¹ Surprise, surprise, less than a month later they were all released without charge. Maybe police hype to keep their budgets up and us scared?

In September 1999, the police shot dead Harry Stanley in Hackney.

According to the cops, Harry was carrying a gun in a bag. It turned out to be a chair leg. Yet more lies and the media lapped it up. At an inquest, the Stanley family's barrister accused Inspector Sharman of "concocting" the story - and said the police shot him "as soon as he began to even slightly turn around". False confessions for the Broadwater Farm Three, lies from police about how Roger Sylvester was killed in Tottenham, scare stories about a "ricin terrorist attack" in Wood Green which turned out to be a "fake passport factory". This list goes on and on.

The truth is the police kill people and are never brought to justice for this. They also spend huge sums of money on failed operations, and then have to lie to

justify their cock-ups. The media are happy to run these stories and can't be bothered to find out if they are correct or not. No point ruining a good story just because it's not true!

So the next time you see a cop on TV telling us this person is a terrorist, or that person was killed and it was their own fault - think twice before you believe it. And it's not just "one bad apple". These lies come from the very top of the police establishment. The police are not accountable to any of us - they are a force out of control. Just because one day they are a smiling "bobby" helping our gran across the road, doesn't mean they won't quickly turn into baton- or gun-wielding thugs.

¹ *The London Paper*, 9 April 2009



CLASS WAR NOT POST CODE WARS

There seems to be a stabbing or a shooting of a young person in London just about every week and the media waste no time in fuelling the fear that exists on our streets. One of the reasons for this misguided and tragic waste of young life is seemingly 'territorial'. Post Code Wars is a new short film, made by students from Park View Academy, which looks at youth violence in our communities and contains inter-generational interviews that explore issues of alienation, political consciousness and historical awareness.

At a recent screening of Post Code Wars in Tottenham, a contributor to the post-film discussion pointed out that "as an act of defiance against his slave name, Malcolm Little changed his name to Malcolm X and threw off his own chains

of slavery - it is a sad irony that alienated young people have now chosen to identify themselves as a number [their postcode] and attack each other".

As with so many other problems in society, the rich are untouched by these 'Post Code Wars', and teenagers in areas like Tottenham, Hackney and Edmonton are crapping on their own doorsteps instead of taking the fight to the real enemy. Perhaps if some of that anger and frustration had been expressed in postcode areas like Westminster, Park Lane, Kensington and Belgravia, things might start to change.

For more information on the film or to organise a screening email Drew Wilkins at Park View Academy on: dwilkins@parkview.haringey.sch.uk

Homes for All Fight All Evictions

According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders, an estimated 75,000 homes will be repossessed this year, three times more than 2007, and nearly twice as many as last year.

The current financial crisis has led to people being laid off work, making them vulnerable to repossession orders due to them struggling to keep up with mortgage repayments.

The financial institutions that have caused these problems get bail-outs from public money when they fall into difficulty. The public on the other hand gets little in the way of assistance when their homes are under threat.

For this reason and as a way to come up with a local, concrete response to the crisis, an anti-repossession group has been set up in order to help and encourage people to fight back.

It intends to do a combination of awareness-raising activities and direct action casework. There are plans to leaflet outside Citizens Advice Bureaux, and to organise protests outside recession-profiteering mortgage lenders or banks that are pushing through repossessions.

While the idea is also to try and help someone through the process, the group is not aiming at offering legal advice but will rather be working along alternative lines. It may not always be possible to stop a repossession happening, but by applying pressure upon the lenders, using direct action, and gaining media attention where it can, the group hopes for positive results.

If you would like to be involved, if you need support or for more information, email: repossession@haringey.org.uk

Hooligans Hijack Bendy Buses

Remember the time when ticket inspectors would merely ask if you had a ticket for your bus journey and ask you to pay if you hadn't? Not anymore! Passengers on bendy buses in Haringey are now subject to further delays in their journey by teams of officials up to 30 strong, including police and immigration officers, to inspect the validity of their Oyster cards. Anyone making a suspect journey is escorted off the bus, questioned about their journey and, if deemed to be travelling illegally, subject to a search and an on-the-spot fine. This excessive show of force is clear intimidation of passengers, and the inclusion of immigration officers and police must be especially stressful for refugees and those whose command of English is not good. What is also particularly disturbing about this policy is the possible use of new legislation: Section 110 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. This allows any police officer to arrest people

for seemingly trivial offences (such as evading a bus fare) and enables them to be physically detained, handcuffed and taken to a police station for a DNA test. Furthermore, people who have attempted to take photographs of the invasion of the buses have been approached and wrongly threatened with action under recent anti-terrorist legislation if they persisted.

These abuses of power are merely a reflection of the way this government is determined to oppress ordinary people and intrude into their lives.



CCTV cameras, databases, ID cards and proposed monitoring of emails and phone calls are further examples. Perhaps these intrusive pieces

of legislation and considerable resources would be put to better use pursuing bosses and bankers who have defrauded us of millions of pounds of public money...

All Systems Go to Kill the Poor

The Fight Against the Welfare Reform Bill

On 14th January 2009, the Welfare Reform Bill was introduced in the Commons. Despite growing concern and resistance it has now reached the Lords. Unless opposition is stepped up, the bill will soon become law, making the most vulnerable people's lives even more difficult.

A simple glance at the bill is enough to realise the government has no intention of helping the poor. Its timing (it was introduced as the recession was hitting hard) is nothing less than outrageous. At a time when support and solidarity should be increased, politicians come up with a bill that aims at the exact opposite.

Its key areas include: increased conditions on claimants; sanctions for anyone failing to comply with Jobcentre Plus rules; threats to remove support for single parents and people with disabilities; compulsory work-for-benefits schemes; privatising more of the work of the Jobcentre.

This is a clear attack on vulnerable people and on the idea that those

in need deserve help. Most of the bill is about increasing conditions on claimants, and sanctions for people who miss an interview or don't fully comply with the rules. Such scandalous measures wrongly imply that people who are in difficult situations are somehow guilty and should pay for the failure of the capitalist system.

People's welfare is being ignored, and the further privatisation of Jobcentre Plus can only reinforce this. Private companies will focus on meeting targets and increasing profits. Rather than considering people's specific requirements, staff will try to force us into underpaid, dead-end jobs.

People with disabilities or special needs, whose cases take longer to deal with, will again lose out. This bill takes us to a point where the benefit system can no longer act as a safeguard against the blind greed and competition that lie at the heart of capitalism, as it has now also become subjected to capitalist market laws.

The idea of making people work

for their benefits seems the most cynical, especially in the middle of a severe job crisis. This trick is certainly not going to solve unemployment, which as the crisis shows is not due to laziness, but directly caused by capitalism. If people work they should get fair pay, not below-the-minimum wage disguised as benefits.

This disgraceful scheme is a vicious attack on workers as much as it is on the unemployed. It is also part of a culture that considers waged work and the mass consumption that goes with it as the be-all and end-all of life in society. The motives behind this scheme are indeed political as well as economic.

They must be fought on both fronts, as the fate awaiting all those who deviate from 'the norm' is the same. Whether you are refusing the latest form of exploitation, not fit to work, or not matching the tougher criteria required by Jobcentre Plus, you will be left with no income support and cast out of society.

This idea of a standardised society where solidarity has no place and the most vulnerable amongst us are exploited needs to be rejected by all. Concrete steps need to be taken to challenge the bill before it becomes reality. Other than spreading the word, possible actions include putting pressure on the government through MPs, protesting outside your local Jobcentre Plus and setting up claimants action groups. But whatever happens, solidarity must be shown against both the wage slavery and dole slavery that the welfare reform bill promises to enforce.

*"The sun beams down on a brand new day
No more welfare tax to pay
Unightly slums gone up in flashing light
Jobless millions whisked away
At last we have more room to play
All systems go to kill the poor tonight"*
Dead Kennedys - Kill the Poor

For more information contact
HSG or check the London Coalition
Against Poverty website:
www.lcap.org.uk

VISTEON

(Continued from page 1)

Because of employer-friendly labour laws, going into bankruptcy allows Visteon UK to wipe its debts and dispense with its workforce without paying them their dues. It would also come as no surprise to us if the company's former directors took production elsewhere or set up a new company employing new staff on worse conditions to do the same job, which is a rumour that has recently circulated.

With the pitiful support the trade union Unite have given their members, the workers' decision to occupy the factory and keep a 24-hour picket was a brave and necessary one. Such actions are important for all workers because they help to change the nature of our struggles. By increasing workers' autonomy, we radicalise industrial struggles and make it possible for corrupt bosses and unfair laws to be effectively challenged. Whatever success is achieved, it will be because the workers decided to fight, thus moving the struggle away from just their trade union and the bosses. For these reasons, the Visteon workers' fight is the fight of all vulnerable workers and should be supported by all.



WANT TO AFFECT GLOBAL SOCIAL CHANGE?

Start with your neighbourhood

After coming across members of Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) leafleting outside Tottenham Job centre, I was curious to find out more. I decided to interview a member of the group. Here's what I learnt.

Think Global – Act Local

It's difficult to change things on an international scale. Even when changes occur they rarely affect things dramatically for people locally. Maybe focusing on local issues has a greater impact on the global than we think. Jo Greenham, a member of HSG, explained why engaging with local issues is so important.

"To make a real difference on a worldwide scale," says Jo, "you will need to speak to, and involve, the people in your street, as they are part of the world community too. So why not start there? It's easier to work with people who live around you, and in effect work from the bottom up rather than the top down."

"What's more you meet people with diverse views, which test your own views and make the challenge that much more real. By organising street parties or sorting out traffic and parking on your street, you get to know your neighbours and what they think."

Self-organising breeds success and improves community spirit

The appealing aspect of a local approach is the opportunity to join forces with people who are actually self-organising already but maybe not aware of it. By working together, linking up and supporting one another, more impact can be made. Jo described how, as part of HSG's anti-advertising campaign, HSG joined forces with a local residents' association to protest against the numerous billboards in the area erected without planning permission. As a result, the council removed many of these billboards. Seeing the impact of your efforts, along with the impact on people living around you, has a huge uplifting feeling for a community. It also proves that people really can take control of their neighbourhoods and get the changes they want to see.

Focusing on local issues also brings you closer to your community, as you work with people and groups that live and work in the area - people who you might otherwise just pass by. In a place like London, frequently accused of being anonymous, for a group to succeed in bringing people together is extremely positive.

Bringing power back to the people

We touched on the subject of the constraints of the current system of government, ideas around anarchism and alternative forms of organisation in a community. 'Anarchism' whilst being a term frequently misunderstood and portrayed negatively, actually represents a good example of what some (but not all) members of HSG are trying to achieve. Jo, an anarchist, believes that through HSG and involvement in local groups she is able to achieve the values she holds. For her, the council claims all the decision-making power excluding the people who are affected by the decisions. By supporting people in creating their own self-organised groups, HSG helps people to take control of their own communities.

Each of us needs to have a say in how our neighbourhoods are organised, without having to become politicians attached to political parties. Importantly, HSG has an approach that doesn't preach or say how it should be, but wants to engage people in that discussion, and in so doing aims to find different and more successful ways of organising our communities.

Workers aren't disposable!

In April, Haringey Solidarity Group took part in a nationwide picket of Subway sandwich shops, in solidarity with sacked migrant worker Natalia Szymanska. Natalia was sacked on the dubious ground of being in breach of the company's health and safety policy. However, it's quite clear this decision was made because Natalia had informed her boss she was pregnant and they wanted to get rid of her – maybe to avoid having to give her maternity leave.

On the day, the picket went well with few people entering Subway. Passers by and Subway staff were supportive of calls to reinstate Natalia and provide her with compensation. This case highlights the way in which bosses think they can target their most vulnerable employees. Workers need to stand together in the face of such attacks, which will only intensify as the recession bites. In the meantime, the campaign continues and will not be silenced.



For more information about the case and the campaign, contact kevin.doherty@burc.org

HARINGEY

SUSTAINABILITY MONTH

June is Sustainability Month in Haringey – a time to consider our effect on the planet and what we can do about it, and enjoy ourselves.

Here are some of the events to join in:

- Saturday 30th May sees the second year of Haringey Independence Day at West Green Learning Centre, 12-6pm with

stalls, films, meetings and cafe; more details at www.haringey.org.uk/independenceday.

- On Saturday 13th June, Haringey Green Fair will be held on Ducketts Common (Turnpike Lane) 12-5pm: live music, children's area, solar-powered cinema.

- June 13th-21st is UK Bike Week. There is a family bike ride

on Sunday 14th at 10.45am from Finsbury Park cafe.

- On Thursday 25th June, Haringey Independent Cinema show the "Age of Stupid" film on sustainability, 7pm at West Green Learning Centre.

- For Saturday 27th June local residents have organised South Tottenham Going Green event at Chestnuts Community Centre,

12 - 4pm, St Ann's Road.

- There is a weekly Food Co-op and Community Kitchen on Fridays 12-3pm, and also the last Saturday of each month, at Broadwater Farm Community Centre.

For more information visit www.sustainableharingey.org.uk

WHO'S WATCHING WHO?

According to a secret government report leaked to Totally Independent on 1st April, a contract is to be tendered for the development of a two-way television. This is, according to the report, "the latest in a series of government initiatives to erode civil liberties even further. It takes the idea of CCTV surveillance to its ultimate extreme".

The concept is that as you watch TV at home someone in a hidden office will be able to watch you.

The contract is to develop a system in which the television tube is able to act as both a receiver and a transmitter. Apparently the technology already exists using a

special tube that bends round on itself – called a u-tube – and is able then to transmit the scene in the living room back to its masters. There has been speculation that the unit will not be fitted with an off switch.

The Home Secretary had this comment: "It is true that HM Government is looking into more effective ways of combating terrorism and increasing security. Nothing has yet been confirmed, but it is obvious that being able to keep an eye on potential threats to the country would make everyone safer."

Emmanuel Goldstein, of the civil liberties group Society Protecting

Ordinary Original Freedoms, said: "The people of this country have had to put up with an increasingly authoritarian government for many years now. This represents the final blow to our long-cherished freedoms."

One of the companies tendering for the contract, the J Joplin Holding Company, claims that

there should not be any problem. "If people have nothing to hide, they have nothing to fear," said a spokesperson. Nevertheless, when

Publisher's note: at this point it is thought police burst into the author's home and took him for questioning. He has not been heard of since.



Haringey Solidarity Group

If you like what you've seen in this newsletter, check out www.haringey.org.uk. As well as more news about grassroots action around Haringey, you'll also find out about upcoming events and how to get active in your area, including how to get involved with HSG.

If you have some news about something you think we should include on our site, then get in touch. Whether it's a street party you've organised with your neighbours, a strike at your workplace or some gossip about a local slum landlord, we're keen to hear from you.

WHO WE ARE

Haringey Solidarity Group is a collective of local people who want to get rid of the current system which places profit and power before people's real needs. The only effective way to do this is for people to get organised, fight back and take over the decision-making in communities and workplaces. To that end we support and participate in local campaigns, spread ideas and help create effective opposition to the powers that be.

For more information: phone 0845 2235270
email info@haringey.org.uk
by post to: HSG, PO Box 2474, London, N8